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8 June 1983

TALKING POINTS FOR DDCI
ON IRAN-IRAQ WAR

The war has settled into skirmishing and border shelling. Any new Iranian attacks over next two months are likely to be limited in scale and objectives. Meanwhile, economic pressures on Iraq mount, while Iran's economic situation is improving as a result of increased oil sales.

Current Military Situation

- Iran's primary troop concentration still is on the Doveyrij River front west of Dezful, but in the past three weeks it has begun moving two infantry brigades from the area.

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- The Iranians apparently have decided to prepare another attack. Its timing and location are not yet clear, and its scope would be limited.
- Recovery of Naft-e Shah, the only Iranian town still held by the Iraqis, is a possible goal.

The Military Balance

- The Iraqis hold numerical advantages of more than two to one in every category of conventional military equipment at most locations along the front.

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- They hold air superiority of nearly four to one and have assured sources of resupply from abroad. The Iraqis also have the ability quickly to detect Iranian buildups and rapidly to reinforce.
 - The most severe limiting factor on Iran's military capability is the lack of a reliable supplier of major weapons systems.
 - Losses in the war and the Western arms embargo have rendered some two-thirds of Iran's military equipment inoperative or partially operative.
 - The Iranians have slightly more troops in the field, but many of them are ill-equipped and poorly trained and lack discipline.
 - Logistics factors have lengthened the time required to build up for attacks and shortened the duration of recent offensives.

The Longer Term

Iranian strategy has probably shifted toward fighting a low-intensity war of attrition punctuated by occasional multi-brigade attacks, none of which could achieve militarily the often stated goal of bringing down the regime of Saddam Hussein.

- Tehran's several military failures in the past year have incurred heavy casualties, increasing war weariness in the population.
- Debate over the war continues in Tehran, but Ayatollah Khomeini shows no signs of backing away from an aggressive military strategy. As long as he lives, a mediated settlement is unlikely.

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- Iran could opt for a more intense conventional war. This option would be costly, take several years, and force Iran to abandon its policy of independence of foreign suppliers.
 - The Soviet Union is the only major arms supplier that could provide enough weapons to have an impact on the war over the next year.
 - Iraq shows no signs of taking advantage of its materiel superiority on the ground by resuming the offensive, although they recently have been more aggressive on defense.
 - We expect them to continue the pressure on Iran with occasional air and missile attacks on border cities and on merchant shipping and oil facilities in the northern Gulf.
 - The only way that Iraq can seriously hurt Iran is to systematically attack Khark Island, Iran's primary oil transshipment facility, or international oil tankers. If Iran were to resume large-scale attacks on the border, Iraq might resort to this strategy. International repercussions, particularly from its Gulf allies, will be important deterrents to such a strategy.

Political Factors

Both Khomeini and Saddam Hussein appear solidly in power for at least the next year.

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- The greatest danger to the clerical regime would come from within following Khomeini's death. The clerics are divided over who should succeed Khomeini, and over other important policies.
 - Saddam Hussein has strengthened his immediate political position since the Iraqi defeats in the spring of 1982 through purges. Iraq's opposition groups--Shias, Kurds, and Communists--can conduct terrorist activity, but do not appear capable of overthrowing Saddam unless Iran scores a major victor.

Economic Factors

The modest improvement in Iran's economic situation is largely attributable to:

- The dramatic increase in oil export earnings in 1982 when revenue jumped 64 percent over 1981 to about \$19 billion. We project oil income this year will reach about \$20 billion.
- Oil exports are now at 1.6 million barrels per day.

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SUBJECT: Talking Points for DDCI on Iran-Iraq War

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